

## CL&L Spring 2024

8 sessions starting March 26 with  
Barry Wallenstein

*He is the fair-haired boy of a little while ago. –  
All Quiet of the Western Front – Erich Maria Remarque*

*How strange that Nature does not  
knock, and yet does not intrude! – Emily Dickinson*

*Longevity, N. Uncommon extension of the fear of death. – Ambrose Bierce*

*Beauty is only skin deep, but ugly goes clean to the bone, - Dorothy Parker*

*A woman is like a tea bag — you can't tell how strong she is until you put her in  
hot water. — Eleanor Roosevelt*

*For those who have dwelt in depression's dark wood, and known its inexplicable  
agony, their return from the abyss is not unlike the ascent of the poet, trudging  
upward and upward out of hell's dark depths and at last emerging into what he  
saw as the shining world. William Styron*



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\*= GUEST POETS

The Peace Prayer of Saint Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

Where there is error, truth;

Where there is injury, pardon;

Where there is doubt, faith;

Where there is despair, hope;

Where there is darkness, light;

And where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek

To be consoled as to console;

To be understood as to understand;

To be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

It is in self-forgetting that we find;

And it is in dying to ourselves that we are born to eternal life.

Amen

From “An Epistle” by Emma Lazarus

*From Joshua Ibn Vives of Allorqui to his former master, Solomon Levi-Paul, de Santa-Maria, Bishop of Cartagena, Chancellor of Castile, and privy councillor to King Henry III of Spain.*

I.

Master and Sage, greetings and health to thee,  
From thy most meek disciple! Deign once more  
Endure me at thy feet, enlighten me,  
As when upon my boyish head of yore,  
Midst the rapt circle gathered round thy knee  
Thy sacred vials of learning thou didst pour.  
By the lase lustre of thy wisdom orbéd  
Be my black doubts illumined and absorbed.

II.

Oft I recall that golden time when thou,  
Born for no second station, heldst with us  
The Rabbi's chair, who are priest and bishop now;  
And we, the youth of Israel, curious,  
Hung on thy counsels, lifted reverent brow  
Unto thy sanctity, would fain discuss  
With thee our Talmud problems good and evil,  
Till startled by the risen stars o'er Seville.

III.

For on the Synagogue's high-pillard porch  
Thou didst hold session, till the sudden sun  
Beyond day's purple limit dropped his torch.  
Then we, as dreamers, woke, to find outrun  
Time's rapid sands. The flame that may not scorch,  
Our hearts caught from thine eyes, thou Shining One.  
I scent not yet sweet lemon-groves in flower,  
But I re-breathe the peace of that deep hour.

IV.

We kissed the sacred borders of thy gown,  
    Brow-aureoled with thy blessing, we went forth  
Through the hushed byways of the twilight town.  
    Then in all life but one thing seemed of worth,  
To seek, find, love the Truth. She set her crown  
    Upon thy head, our Master, at thy birth;  
She bade thy lips drop honey, fired thine eyes  
With the unclouded glow of sun-steeped skies.

V.

Forgive me, if I dwell on that which, viewed  
    From thy new vantage-ground, must seem a mist  
Of error, by auroral youth endued  
    With alien lustre. Still in me subsist  
Those reeking vapors; faith and gratitude  
    Still lead me to the hand my boy-lips kissed  
For benison and guidance. Not in wrath,  
Master, but in wise patience, point my path.

VI.

For I, thy servant, gather in one sheaf  
    The venomed shafts of slander, which thy word  
Shall shrivel to small dust. If haply grief,  
    Or momentary pain, I deal, my Lord  
Blame not thy servant's zeal, nor be thou deaf  
    Unto my soul's blind cry for light. Accord—  
Pitying my love, if too superb to care  
For hate-soiled name—an answer to my prayer.

Sonnet 64 by Shakespeare 1564 - 1616

When I have seen by Time's fell hand defac'd  
The rich proud cost of outworn buried age;  
When sometime lofty towers I see down-ras'd  
And brass eternal slave to mortal rage;

When I have seen the hungry ocean gain  
Advantage on the kingdom of the shore,  
And the firm soil win of the wat'ry main,  
Increasing store with loss and loss with store;

When I have seen such interchange of state,  
Or state itself confounded to decay;  
Ruin hath taught me thus to ruminat,  
That Time will come and take my love away.

This thought is as a death, which cannot choose  
But weep to have that which it fears to lose.



Sheep in Winter by John Clare 1793–1864

The sheep get up and make their many tracks  
And bear a load of snow upon their backs,  
And gnaw the frozen turnip to the ground  
With sharp quick bite, and then go noising round  
The boy that pecks the turnips all the day  
And knocks his hands to keep the cold away  
And laps his legs in straw to keep them warm  
And hides behind the hedges from the storm.  
The sheep, as tame as dogs, go where he goes  
And try to shake their fleeces from the snows,  
Then leave their frozen meal and wander round  
The stubble stack that stands beside the ground,  
And lie all night and face the drizzling storm  
And shun the hovel where they might be warm.

To Sleep by John Keats 1795-1821

O soft embalmer of the still midnight,  
Shutting, with careful fingers and benign,  
Our gloom-pleasèd eyes, embowered from the light,  
Enshaded in forgetfulness divine:

O soothest Sleep! if so it please thee, close  
In midst of this thine hymn, my willing eyes,  
Or wait the 'Amen', ere thy poppy throws  
Around my bed its lulling charities.

Then save me, or the passèd day will shine  
Upon my pillow, breeding many woes;  
Save me from curious conscience, that still hoards  
Its strength for darkness, burrowing like the mole;

Turn the key deftly in the oilèd wards,  
And seal the hushèd casket of my soul.

Fairy-Land by E. A. Poe 1809-1849

Dim vales—and shadowy floods—  
And cloudy-looking woods,  
Whose forms we can't discover  
For the tears that drip all over:  
Huge moons there wax and wane—  
Again—again—again—  
Every moment of the night—  
Forever changing places—  
And they put out the star-light  
With the breath from their pale faces.  
About twelve by the moon-dial,  
One more filmy than the rest  
(A kind which, upon trial,  
They have found to be the best)  
Comes down—still down—and down  
With its centre on the crown  
Of a mountain's eminence,  
While its wide circumference  
In easy drapery falls  
Over hamlets, over halls,  
Wherever they may be—  
O'er the strange woods—o'er the sea—  
Over spirits on the wing—  
Over every drowsy thing—  
And buries them up quite  
In a labyrinth of light—  
And then, how, deep! —O, deep,  
Is the passion of their sleep.  
In the morning they arise,  
And their moony covering  
Is soaring in the skies,  
With the tempests as they toss,  
Like—almost any thing—  
Or a yellow Albatross.

They use that moon no more  
For the same end as before,  
Videlicet, a tent—  
Which I think extravagant:  
Its atomies, however,  
Into a shower dissever,  
Of which those butterflies  
Of Earth, who seek the skies,  
And so come down again  
(Never-contented things!)  
Have brought a specimen  
Upon their quivering wings.

A Winter Bluejay by Sara Teasdale 1884 - 1933

Crisply the bright snow whispered,  
Crunching beneath our feet;  
Behind us as we walked along the parkway,  
Our shadows danced,  
Fantastic shapes in vivid blue.  
Across the lake the skaters  
Flew to and fro,  
With sharp turns weaving  
A frail invisible net.  
In ecstasy the earth  
Drank the silver sunlight;  
In ecstasy the skaters  
Drank the wine of speed;  
In ecstasy we laughed  
Drinking the wine of love.  
Had not the music of our joy  
Sounded its highest note?  
But no,  
For suddenly, with lifted eyes you said,  
“Oh look!”  
There, on the black bough of a snow flecked maple,  
Fearless and gay as our love,  
A bluejay cocked his crest!  
Oh who can tell the range of joy  
Or set the bounds of beauty?

Spring Song by Dorothy Parker 1893 –1967

(In the Expected Manner)

Enter April, laughingly,  
    Blossoms in her tumbled hair,  
High of heart, and fancy-free—  
    When was maiden half so fair?  
Bright her eyes with easy tears,  
    Wanton-sweet, her smiles for men.  
“Winter’s gone,” she cries, “and here’s Spring again.”

When we loved, ‘twas April, too;  
    Madcap April—urged us on.  
Just as she did, so did you—  
    Sighed, and smiled, and then were gone.  
How she plied her pretty arts,  
    How she laughed and sparkled then!  
April, make love in our hearts  
    Spring again

Recurrence by Dorothy Parker 1893 -1967

We shall have our little day.  
Take my hand and travel still  
Round and round the little way,  
Up and down the little hill.

It is good to love again;  
Scan the renovated skies,  
Dip and drive the idling pen,  
Sweetly tint the paling lies.

Trace the dripping, piercèd heart,  
Speak the fair, insistent verse,  
Vow to God, and slip apart,  
Little better, little worse.

Would we need not know before  
How shall end this prettiness;  
One of us must love the more,  
One of us shall love the less.

Thus it is, and so it goes;  
We shall have our day, my dear.  
Where, unwilling, dies the rose  
Buds the new, another year.

## A Fairly Sad Tale by Dorothy Parker

I think that I shall never know  
Why I am thus, and I am so.  
Around me, other girls inspire  
In men the rush and roar of fire,  
The sweet transparency of glass,  
The tenderness of April grass,  
The durability of granite;  
But me- I don't know how to plan it.  
The lads I've met in Cupid's deadlock  
Were- shall we say?- born out of wedlock.  
They broke my heart, they stilled my song,  
And said they had to run along,  
Explaining, so to sop my tears,  
First came their parents or careers.  
But ever does experience  
Deny me wisdom, calm, and sense!  
Though she's a fool who seeks to capture  
The twenty-first fine, careless rapture,  
I must go on, till ends my rope,  
Who from my birth was cursed with hope.  
A heart in half is chaste, archaic;  
But mine resembles a mosaic-  
The thing's become ridiculous!  
Why am I so? Why am I thus?



The Second Coming by W. B. Yeats 1865 - 1939

Turning and turning in the widening gyre  
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;  
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;  
The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;  
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.  
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out  
When a vast image out of *Spiritus Mundi*  
Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert  
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,  
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,  
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it  
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.  
The darkness drops again; but now I know  
That twenty centuries of stony sleep  
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,  
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,  
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?  
w. 1919

The Rum Tum Tugger is a Curious Cat by T.S. Eliot 1888 - 1965

The Rum Tum Tugger is a Curious Cat:  
If you offer him pheasant he would rather have grouse.  
If you put him in a house he would much prefer a flat,  
If you put him in a flat then he'd rather have a house.  
If you set him on a mouse then he only wants a rat,  
If you set him on a rat then he'd rather chase a mouse.  
Yes the Rum Tum Tugger is a Curious Cat--  
And there isn't any call for me to shout it:  
For he will do  
As he do do  
And there's no doing anything about it!

The Rum Tum Tugger is a terrible bore:  
When you let him in, then he wants to be out;  
He's always on the wrong side of every door,  
And as soon as he's at home, then he'd like to get about.  
He likes to lie in the bureau drawer,  
But he makes such a fuss if he can't get out.

Yes the Rum Tum Tugger is a Curious Cat--  
And there isn't any use for you to doubt it:  
For he will do  
As he do do  
And there's no doing anything about it!

The Rum Tum Tugger is a curious beast:  
His disobliging ways are a matter of habit.  
If you offer him fish then he always wants a feast;  
When there isn't any fish then he won't eat rabbit.  
If you offer him cream then he sniffs and sneers,  
For he only likes what he finds for himself;

So you'll catch him in it right up to the ears,  
If you put it away on the larder shelf.  
The Rum Tum Tugger is artful and knowing,  
The Rum Tum Tugger doesn't care for a cuddle;  
But he'll leap on your lap in the middle of your sewing,  
For there's nothing he enjoys like a horrible muddle.  
Yes the Rum Tum Tugger is a Curious Cat--  
And there isn't any need for me to spout it:  
For he will do  
As he do do  
And there's no doing anything about it!

To an Athlete Dying Young by A. E. Housman 1859-1836

The time you won your town the race  
We chaired you through the market-place;  
Man and boy stood cheering by,  
And home we brought you shoulder-high.

Today, the road all runners come,  
Shoulder-high we bring you home,  
And set you at your threshold down,  
Townsmen of a stiller town.

Smart lad, to slip betimes away  
From fields where glory does not stay,  
And early though the laurel grows  
It withers quicker than the rose.

Eyes the shady night has shut  
Cannot see the record cut,  
And silence sounds no worse than cheers  
After earth has stopped the ears.

Now you will not swell the rout  
Of lads that wore their honours out,  
Runners whom renown outran  
And the name died before the man.

So set, before its echoes fade,  
The fleet foot on the sill of shade,  
And hold to the low lintel up  
The still-defended challenge-cup.

And round that early-laurelled head  
Will flock to gaze the strengthless dead,  
And find unwithered on its curls  
The garland briefer than a girl's.

Song in the Manner of Housman by Ezra Pound

O woe, woe,  
People are born and die,  
We also shall be dead pretty soon  
Therefore let us act as if we were  
dead already.

The bird sits on the hawthorn tree  
But he dies also, presently.  
Some lads get hung, and some get shot.  
Woeful is this human lot.  
Woe! woe, etcetera . . . .

London is a woeful place,  
Shropshire is much pleasanter.  
Then let us smile a little space  
Upon fond nature's morbid grace.  
Oh, Woe, woe, woe, etcetera . . .

Lament of the Frontier Guard by Ezra Pound

By the North Gate, the wind blows full of sand,  
Lonely from the beginning of time until now!  
Trees fall, the grass goes yellow with autumn.

I climb the towers and towers  
to watch out the barbarous land:

Desolate castle, the sky, the wide desert.

There is no wall left to this village.

Bones white with a thousand frosts,

High heaps, covered with trees and grass;

Who brought this to pass?

Who has brought the flaming imperial anger?

Who has brought the army with drums and with kettle-drums?

Barbarous kings.

A gracious spring, turned to blood-ravenous autumn,

A turmoil of wars - men, spread over the middle kingdom,

Three hundred and sixty thousand,

And sorrow, sorrow like rain.

Sorrow to go, and sorrow, sorrow returning,

Desolate, desolate fields,

And no children of warfare upon them,

No longer the men for offence and defence.

Ah, how shall you know the dreary sorrow at the North Gate,

With Rihoku's name forgotten,

And we guardsmen fed to the tigers.

---

This Is Just To Say by William Carlos Williams

I have eaten  
the plums  
that were in  
the icebox

and which  
you were probably  
saving  
for breakfast

Forgive me  
they were delicious  
so sweet  
and so cold

#

Reply (crumpled on her desk)

Dear Bill: I've made a  
couple of sandwiches for you.  
In the ice-box you'll find  
blue-berries--a cup of grapefruit  
a glass of cold coffee.

On the stove is the tea-pot  
with enough tea leaves  
for you to make tea if you  
prefer--Just light the gas--  
boil the water and put it in the tea

Plenty of bread in the bread-box  
and butter and eggs--  
I didn't know just what to  
make for you. Several people  
called up about office hours--  
See you later. Love. Floss. / Please switch off the telephone.

The Song of the Drunkard by Rainer Maria Rilke [1875-1926]

It wasn't in me. it went in and out.  
I wanted to hold it. it held, with the wine.  
(I no longer know what it was.)  
then wine held this and that for me  
till I could never leave him completely.  
I am a fool.

now I play in his game and he shakes me out,  
looking at me disdainfully and perhaps today  
he will lose me to death – that brute!  
if he wins me, the dirtiest card in the pack,  
he'll use me to scratch his scabs  
and throw me away into the muck.

#

### Childhood

It would be good to give much thought, before  
you try to find words for something so lost,  
for those long childhood afternoons you knew  
that vanished so completely —and why?

We're still reminded—: sometimes by a rain,  
but we can no longer say what it means;  
life was never again so filled with meeting,  
with reunion and with passing on

as back then, when nothing happened to us  
except what happens to things and creatures:  
we lived their world as something human,  
and became filled to the brim with figures.

And became as lonely as a sheperd  
and as overburdened by vast distances,  
and summoned and stirred as from far away,  
and slowly, like a long new thread,  
introduced into that picture-sequence  
where now having to go on bewilders us.



The Farmer's Bride by Charlotte Mew 1869 – 1928

Three summers since I chose a maid,  
Too young maybe—but more's to do  
At harvest-time than bide and woo.

When us was wed she turned afraid  
Of love and me and all things human;  
Like the shut of a winter's day  
Her smile went out, and 'twadn't a woman—  
More like a little frightened fay.

One night, in the Fall, she runned away.

“Out 'mong the sheep, her be,” they said,  
'Should properly have been abed;  
But sure enough she wadn't there  
Lying awake with her wide brown stare.

So over seven-acre field and up-along across the down  
We chased her, flying like a hare  
Before our lanterns. To Church-Town  
All in a shiver and a scare  
We caught her, fetched her home at last  
And turned the key upon her, fast.

She does the work about the house  
As well as most, but like a mouse:  
Happy enough to chat and play  
With birds and rabbits and such as they,  
So long as men-folk keep away.

“Not near, not near!” her eyes beseech  
When one of us comes within reach.

The women say that beasts in stall  
Look round like children at her call.  
I've hardly heard her speak at all.

Shy as a leveret, swift as he,  
Straight and slight as a young larch tree,  
Sweet as the first wild violets, she,  
To her wild self. But what to me?

The short days shorten and the oaks are brown,  
The blue smoke rises to the low grey sky,  
One leaf in the still air falls slowly down,  
A magpie's spotted feathers lie  
On the black earth spread white with rime,  
The berries redden up to Christmas-time.  
What's Christmas-time without there be  
Some other in the house than we!

She sleeps up in the attic there  
Alone, poor maid. 'Tis but a stair  
Betwixt us. Oh! my God! the down,  
The soft young down of her, the brown,  
The brown of her—her eyes, her hair, her hair!

*Love is Not All (Sonnet XXX)* by Edna St. Vincent Millay 1892 –1950

Love is not all: it is not meat nor drink  
Nor slumber nor a roof against the rain;  
Nor yet a floating spar to men that sink  
And rise and sink and rise and sink again;

Love can not fill the thickened lung with breath,  
Nor clean the blood, nor set the fractured bone;  
Yet many a man is making friends with death  
Even as I speak, for lack of love alone.

It well may be that in a difficult hour,  
Pinned down by pain and moaning for release,  
Or nagged by want past resolution's power,  
I might be driven to sell your love for peace,

Or trade the memory of this night for food.  
It well may be. I do not think I would.

Souvenir by Edna St. Vincent Millay 1892 –1950

Just a rainy day or two  
In a windy tower,  
That was all I had of you—  
Saving half an hour.

Marred by greeting passing groups  
In a cinder walk,  
Near some naked blackberry hoops  
Dim with purple chalk.

I remember three or four  
Things you said in spite,  
And an ugly coat you wore,  
Plaided black and white.

Just a rainy day or two  
And a bitter word.  
Why do I remember you  
As a singing bird?

The Pylons by Stephen Spender 1909-1995

The secret of these hills was stone, and cottages  
Of that stone made,  
And crumbling roads  
That turned on sudden hidden villages

Now over these small hills, they have built the concrete  
That trails black wire  
Pylons, those pillars  
Bare like nude giant girls that have no secret.

The valley with its gilt and evening look  
And the green chestnut  
Of customary root,  
Are mocked dry like the parched bed of a brook.

But far above and far as sight endures  
Like whips of anger  
With lightning's danger  
There runs the quick perspective of the future.

This dwarfs our emerald country by its trek  
So tall with prophecy  
Dreaming of cities  
Where often clouds shall lean their swan-white neck.

If We Must Die by Claude McKay 1890 - 1948

If we must die, let it not be like hogs  
Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,  
While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs,  
Making their mock at our accursed lot.  
If we must die, O let us nobly die,  
So that our precious blood may not be shed  
In vain; then even the monsters we defy  
Shall be constrained to honor us though dead!  
O kinsmen! we must meet the common foe!  
Though far outnumbered let us show us brave,  
And for their thousand blows deal one death-blow!  
What though before us lies the open grave?  
Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,  
Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!

To O. E. A. by Claude McKay 1889 –1948

Your voice is the color of a robin's breast,  
And there's a sweet sob in it like rain—still rain in the night.  
Among the leaves of the trumpet-tree, close to his nest,  
The pea-dove sings, and each note thrills me with strange delight  
Like the words, wet with music, that well from your trembling throat.  
I'm afraid of your eyes, they're so bold,  
Searching me through, reading my thoughts, shining like gold.  
But sometimes they are gentle and soft like the dew on the lips of the eucharis  
Before the sun comes warm with his lover's kiss,  
You are sea-foam, pure with the star's loveliness,  
Not mortal, a flower, a fairy, too fair for the beauty-shorn earth,  
All wonderful things, all beautiful things, gave of their wealth to your birth:  
O I love you so much, not recking of passion, that I feel it is wrong,  
But men will love you, flower, fairy, non-mortal spirit burdened with flesh,  
Forever, life-long.

Shibboleth by Paul Celan 1920 – 1970

along with my stones  
the big cry  
behind the bars  
they dragged me  
in the middle of the market  
there,  
where the flag rolls up, I  
swore no oath.

Flute,  
Double Flute of the Night:  
think of the dark  
twin blush  
in Vienna and Madrid.

Lower your flag to half-mast  
memory.  
At half mast  
for today and always.

Heart:

make yourself known here too  
here, in the middle of the market.  
Call out the shibboleth  
away from home:  
February. No pasaran.  
Unicorn:

you know about the stones  
you know about the water  
come,  
i'm taking you away  
to the voices  
from Estremadura.

This Evening Also by Paul Celan

more fully,  
since snow fell even on this  
sun-drifted, sun-drenched sea,  
blossoms the ice in those baskets  
you carry into town.

sand  
you demand in return,  
for the last  
rose back at home  
this evening also wants to be fed  
out of the trickling hour.



The Opposite House by Robert Lowell 1917 – 1977

All day the opposite house,  
an abandoned police station,  
just an opposite house,  
is square enough—six floors,  
six windows to a floor,  
pigeons ganging through  
broken windows and cooing  
like gangs of children tooting  
empty bottles.

Tonight though, I see it shine  
in the Azores of my open window.  
Its manly, old-fashioned lines  
are gorgeously rectilinear.  
It's like some firework to be fired  
at the end of the garden party,  
some Spanish casa, luminous  
with heraldry and murder,  
marooned in New York.

A stringy policeman is crooked  
In the doorway, one hand on his re-  
volver.  
He counts his bullets like beads.  
Two on horseback sidle  
the crowd to the curb. A red light  
whirls on the roof of an armed car,  
plodding slower than a turtle.  
Deterrent terror!  
Viva la muerte!

Letter to New York by Elizabeth Bishop

For Louise Crane

In your next letter I wish you'd say  
where you are going and what you are doing;  
how are the plays and after the plays  
what other pleasures you're pursuing:

taking cabs in the middle of the night,  
driving as if to save your soul  
where the road goes round and round the park  
and the meter glares like a moral owl,

and the trees look so queer and green  
standing alone in big black caves  
and suddenly you're in a different place  
where everything seems to happen in waves,  
and most of the jokes you just can't catch,  
like dirty words rubbed off a slate,  
and the songs are loud but somehow dim  
and it gets so terribly late,  
and coming out of the brownstone house  
to the gray sidewalk, the watered street,  
one side of the buildings rises with the sun  
like a glistening field of wheat.

--Wheat, not oats, dear. I'm afraid  
if it's wheat it's none of your sowing,  
nevertheless I'd like to know  
what you are doing and where you are going.

After Someone's Death by Tomas Transtromer 1931-2015

Once there was a shock  
that left behind a long, pale, shimmering comet's tail.  
It shelters us. It makes the TV images fuzzy.  
It settles in cold droplets on the power lines.

You can still shuffle along on skis in the winter sun  
through groves where last year's leaves hang on.  
Like pages torn from old telephone books—  
all of the names swallowed up by the cold.

It's still pleasant to feel the heart beating.  
But the shadow often seems more real than the body.  
The samurai looks insignificant  
beside his armor of black dragon scales.

*Translated from the Swedish by Patty Crane*

Won't You Celebrate with Me by Lucile Clifton

won't you celebrate with me  
what i have shaped into  
a kind of life? i had no model.  
born in babylon  
both nonwhite and woman  
what did i see to be except myself?  
i made it up  
here on this bridge between  
starshine and clay,  
my one hand holding tight  
my other hand; come celebrate  
with me that everyday  
something has tried to kill me  
and has failed.

Poem In Praise Of Menstruation by Lucille Clifton

if there is a river  
more beautiful than this  
bright as the blood  
red edge of the moon if  
there is a river  
more faithful than this  
returning each month  
to the same delta if there

is a river  
braver than this  
coming and coming in a surge  
of passion, of pain if there is

a river  
more ancient than this  
daughter of eve  
mother of cain and of abel if there is in

the universe such a river if  
there is some where water  
more powerful than this wild  
water

pray that it flows also  
through animals  
beautiful and faithful and ancient  
and female and brave

Exiles by Marilyn Hacker

Her brown falcon perches above the sink  
as steaming water forks over my hands.  
Below the wrists they shrivel and turn pink.  
I am in exile in my own land.

Her half-grown cats scuffle across the floor  
trailing a slime of blood from where they fed.  
I lock the door. They claw under the door.  
I am an exile in my own bed.

Her spotted mongrel, bristling with red mange,  
sleeps on the threshold of the Third Street bar  
where I drink brandy as the couples change.  
I am in exile where my neighbors are.

On the pavement, cans of ashes burn.  
Her green lizard scuttles from the light  
around torn cardboard charred to glowing fern.  
I am in exile in my own sight.

Her blond child sits on the stoop when I come  
back at night. Cold hands, blue lids; we both  
need sleep. She tells me she is going to die.  
I am in exile in my own youth.

Lady of distances, this fire, this water,  
this earth makes sanctuary where I stand.  
Call of your animals and your blond daughter,  
I am in exile in my own hands.

A Line-storm Song by Robert Frost

The line-storm clouds fly tattered and swift,  
The road is forlorn all day,  
Where a myriad snowy quartz stones lift,  
And the hoof-prints vanish away.  
The roadside flowers, too wet for the bee,  
Expend their bloom in vain.  
Come over the hills and far with me,  
And be my love in the rain.

The birds have less to say for themselves  
In the wood-world's torn despair  
Than now these numberless years the elves,  
Although they are no less there:  
All song of the woods is crushed like some  
Wild, easily shattered rose.  
Come, be my love in the wet woods; come,  
Where the boughs rain when it blows.

There is the gale to urge behind  
And bruit our singing down,  
And the shallow waters aflutter with wind  
From which to gather your gown.  
What matter if we go clear to the west,  
And come not through dry-shod?  
For wilding brooch shall wet your breast  
The rain-fresh goldenrod.

Oh, never this whelming east wind swells  
But it seems like the sea's return  
To the ancient lands where it left the shells  
Before the age of the fern;  
And it seems like the time when after doubt  
Our love came back amain.  
Oh, come forth into the storm and rout  
And be my love in the rain.

Acquainted with The Night by Robert Frost

I have been one acquainted with the night.  
I have walked out in rain - and back in rain.  
I have outwalked the furthest city light.

I have looked down the saddest city lane.  
I have passed by the watchman on his beat  
And dropped my eyes, unwilling to explain.

I have stood still and stopped the sound of feet  
When far away an interrupted cry  
Came over houses from another street,

But not to call me back or say good-bye;  
And further still at an unearthly height,  
One luminary clock against the sky

Proclaimed the time was neither wrong nor right.  
I have been one acquainted with the night.



The Waking by Theodore Roethke 1908 - 1963

I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow.  
I feel my fate in what I cannot fear.  
I learn by going where I have to go.

We think by feeling. What is there to know?  
I hear my being dance from ear to ear.  
I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow.

Of those so close beside me, which are you?  
God bless the Ground! I shall walk softly there,  
And learn by going where I have to go.

Light takes the Tree; but who can tell us how?  
The lowly worm climbs up a winding stair;  
I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow.

Great Nature has another thing to do  
To you and me, so take the lively air,  
And, lovely, learn by going where to go.

This shaking keeps me steady. I should know.  
What falls away is always. And is near.  
I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow.  
I learn by going where I have to go.

## I Sing What You Loved Gabriela Mistral 1889 –1957

*translated from the Spanish by Ursula K. Le Guin*

Life of my life, what you loved I sing.  
If you're near, if you're listening,  
remembering earth, in the evening,  
my life, my shadow, hear me sing.

Life of my life, I can't be still.  
What is a story we never tell?  
How can you find me unless I call?

Life of my life, I haven't changed,  
not turned aside and not estranged.  
Come to me as the shadows grow long,  
come, life of my life, if you know the song  
you used to know, if you know my name.  
I and the song are still the same.

Beyond time or place I keep the faith.  
Follow a path or follow no path,  
don't fear the night or the rainy wind.  
call me to come to you, now at the end,  
and come to me, soul of my soul, my friend.

In Every Direction by Silvina Ocampo 1903-1993

We go leaving ourselves in every direction,  
in beds, in rooms, in fields, in seas, in cities,  
and each one of those fragments  
that has ceased to be us, continues being  
as always us, making us  
jealous and hostile.  
"What will it do that I would like to do?"  
we think. "Who will it see that I would like to see?"  
We often receive chance news  
of that creature . . .  
We enter its dreams  
when it dreams of us,  
loving it  
like those whom we love most;  
we knock at its doors  
with burning hands,  
we think it will return in the illusion of belonging to us  
mistaken as before  
but it will keep being treacherous and unreachable.  
As with our rivals we would kill it. We will only be able  
to glimpse it in photographs. It must survive us.

## Epitaph for an Aroma by Silvina Ocampo

When the dew descended yesterday,  
amid future stamens and corollas,  
I perished in a garden that presented  
shadows in the shapes of trees, and water.  
Two ribbons bound me, here they are:  
longer than my petals they endured,  
pale, like the ribbons of the dead.  
The same implicit partnership of flowers,  
the similar hands, the care,  
the season and the blood of evening,  
will not be able to repeat exactly  
the dark tunnels of my aroma:  
infinite will be in memory  
the intricate paths of the perfume;  
infinite, too, the deceptive  
reappearance of every moment.  
And though the days may want to bring them back,  
and though many circumstances join together- -  
repetition of phrases or of people,  
the same inclination of a head- -  
neither does that person anymore exist  
for whom I was in secret destined.

An Autocorrect Poem by Fae Mettitt (age 9)

Cats are coming  
Dogs are not very friendly  
Monkeys created a new life  
Koalas have a lot of explaining to do  
Pandas need help from your parents  
Foxes have been doing the wrong thing  
And bats are in the same house as you  
BATS ARE IN THE SAME HOUSE AS YOU

—from 2023 Rattle Young Poets Anthology

Why do you like to write poetry?

Fae Merritt: “I like writing because it’s fun to make up stories and write about your ideas. It can be not real in the world but it becomes real when you write it.”

From Spoon River by Edgar Lee Masters 1868 - 1950

*Ollie McGee*

HAVE you seen walking through the village  
A man with downcast eyes and haggard face?  
That is my husband who, by secret cruelty  
never to be told, robbed me of my youth and my beauty;  
Till at last, wrinkled and with yellow teeth,  
And with broken pride and shameful humility,  
I sank into the grave.  
But what think you gnaws at my husband's heart?  
The face of what I was, the face of what he made me!  
These are driving him to the place where I lie.  
In death, therefore, I am avenged.



*Fletcher McGee*

SHE took my strength by minutes,  
She took my life by hours,  
She drained me like a fevered moon  
That saps the spinning world.  
The days went by like shadows,  
The minutes wheeled like stars.  
She took pity from my heart,  
And made it into smiles.  
She was a hunk of sculptor's clay,  
My secret thoughts were fingers:  
They flew behind her pensive brow  
And lined it deep with pain.  
They set the lips, and sagged the cheeks,  
And drooped the eyes with sorrow.  
My soul had entered in the clay,  
Fighting like seven devils.  
It was not mine, it was not hers;  
She held it, but its struggles  
Modeled a face she hated,  
And a face I feared to see.  
I beat the windows, shook the bolts.  
I hid me in a corner--  
And then she died and haunted me,  
And hunted me for life.

From “Sleeping with Bashō” by David Trinidad

AT THE YAM FESTIVAL

What a delicious life!  
When I cut a sweet  
potato in half, I get  
the harvest moon.

STRIPPED BRANCHES

What’s left after the wind  
blows every blossom  
off the dog cherry—  
a tree of wagging tails.

SURRENDER TO THE BEAUTY OF FLOWERS

Be sure to wear  
your flowered robe  
when you come out  
to view the blossoms.

FAMILY HISTORY

The bamboo sprout  
cares nothing  
about the stalk  
that produced him.

WAGGING TONGUES

Every red leaf  
rustling  
with gossip.

LIGHTS OUT

Unhappily,  
the new moon  
has been sent upstairs  
before her bedtime.

SAYŌNARA

Like wild geese,  
we'll only be separated  
by clouds, my dear,  
dear friend.

HOUSE CALL

How come the rich merchant  
never sends a horse  
to fetch the village poet?

SEEING IS BELIEVING

I found god  
in plum blossoms,  
not the great blank sky  
beyond them.



Almost by Mark Jarman

Almost grasped what Grandmother Grace knew  
Last Sunday sitting in church, almost knew  
What Alexander Campbell grasped when, confronted  
With the desolate orphan, he told her, “You  
Are a child of God. Go claim your inheritance.”  
Almost got it. There it was in the sunlight,  
Squared in the clear glass windows, on the durable leaves  
Of the magnolia outside. Almost grasped the weather  
That turns clear and crystallized in Hans Küng’s brain.  
Almost held it in the ellipses and measure  
Of my almost understanding. I see the moment  
There in my notebook, then the next day’s anxiety  
Spilling like something wet across the ink.  
I almost put in my hand a vast acceptance  
And almost blessed myself, then it slipped away.  
All that colossal animal vivacity—smoke  
Of the distant horizon, most of it, haze.  
But to have known in any place or time  
What they knew is worth a record, a few notes.  
Almost knew what they knew. Almost got it.

—*from* **Rattle #25, Summer 2006**

**Mark Jarman:** “It took me years to figure out that one of the biggest influences on me as a writer had been the fact that I lived in a house with someone who had to write something every week, get up in front of bunch of people, and basically perform it. It was my father writing sermons.” (**web**)

Celestial Music by Louise Glück 1943-2023

I have a friend who still believes in heaven.  
Not a stupid person, yet with all she knows, she literally talks to God.  
She thinks someone listens in heaven.  
On earth she's unusually competent.  
Brave too, able to face unpleasantness.

We found a caterpillar dying in the dirt, greedy ants crawling over it.  
I'm always moved by disaster, always eager to oppose vitality  
But timid also, quick to shut my eyes.  
Whereas my friend was able to watch, to let events play out  
According to nature. For my sake she intervened  
Brushing a few ants off the torn thing, and set it down  
Across the road.

My friend says I shut my eyes to God, that nothing else explains  
My aversion to reality. She says I'm like the child who  
Buries her head in the pillow  
So as not to see, the child who tells herself  
That light causes sadness-  
My friend is like the mother. Patient, urging me  
To wake up an adult like herself, a courageous person-

In my dreams, my friend reproaches me. We're walking  
On the same road, except it's winter now;  
She's telling me that when you love the world you hear celestial music:  
Look up, she says. When I look up, nothing.  
Only clouds, snow, a white business in the trees  
Like brides leaping to a great height-  
Then I'm afraid for her; I see her  
Caught in a net deliberately cast over the earth-

In reality, we sit by the side of the road, watching the sun set;  
From time to time, the silence pierced by a birdcall.  
It's this moment we're trying to explain, the fact  
That we're at ease with death, with solitude.  
My friend draws a circle in the dirt; inside, the caterpillar doesn't move.  
She's always trying to make something whole, something beautiful, an image  
Capable of life apart from her.  
We're very quiet. It's peaceful sitting here, not speaking, The composition  
Fixed, the road turning suddenly dark, the air  
Going cool, here and there the rocks shining and glittering-  
It's this stillness we both love.  
The love of form is a love of endings.

The Night Migrations by Louise Glück 1943-2023

This is the moment when you see again  
the red berries of the mountain ash  
and in the dark sky  
the birds' night migrations.

It grieves me to think  
the dead won't see them—  
these things we depend on,  
they disappear.

What will the soul do for solace then?  
I tell myself maybe it won't need  
these pleasures anymore;  
maybe just not being is simply enough,  
hard as that is to imagine.

From “Tempest” by Roberto Carlos Garcia

*caliban lies face down on a cot in a 6 x 9 x 12 jail cell*

*he writes a letter to his mother, sycorax*

[caliban:]

some days raft  
some days tire  
some days sea ocean wrath  
some days shore  
some days coffin  
some days van  
some days la bestia  
some days coyote  
some days border patrol  
some days militia  
some days ditch  
some days dry white bones in sand  
some days bombings  
some days refugee camps  
some days treks through europe  
some days slavers  
some days 5—out in 3  
some days 10 to 15 no parole  
some days public defender  
some days no play  
but always, always,  
we are trapped in a cell  
the one inside or the one outside

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The Weary Blues by Langston Hughes 1901 –1967

Droning a drowsy syncopated tune,  
Rocking back and forth to a mellow croon,  
    I heard a Negro play.  
Down on Lenox Avenue the other night  
By the pale dull pallor of an old gas light  
    He did a lazy sway . . .  
    He did a lazy sway . . .  
To the tune o' those Weary Blues.  
With his ebony hands on each ivory key  
He made that poor piano moan with melody.  
    O Blues!  
Swaying to and fro on his rickety stool  
He played that sad raggy tune like a musical fool.  
    Sweet Blues!  
Coming from a black man's soul.  
    O Blues!  
In a deep song voice with a melancholy tone  
I heard that Negro sing, that old piano moan—  
    "Ain't got nobody in all this world,  
    Ain't got nobody but ma self.  
    I's gwine to quit ma frownin'  
    And put ma troubles on the shelf."  
  
Thump, thump, thump, went his foot on the floor.  
He played a few chords then he sang some more—  
    "I got the Weary Blues  
    And I can't be satisfied.  
    Got the Weary Blues  
    And can't be satisfied—  
    I ain't happy no mo'  
    And I wish that I had died."  
And far into the night he crooned that tune.  
The stars went out and so did the moon.  
The singer stopped playing and went to bed  
While the Weary Blues echoed through his head.  
He slept like a rock or a man that's dead.

From *The Weary Blues* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1926) by Langston Hughes.

Having a Coke with You by Frank O'Hara 1926–1966

is even more fun than going to San Sebastian, Irún, Hendaye, Biarritz, Bayonne  
or being sick to my stomach on the Travesera de Gracia in Barcelona  
partly because in your orange shirt you look like a better happier St. Sebastian  
partly because of my love for you, partly because of your love for yoghurt  
partly because of the fluorescent orange tulips around the birches  
partly because of the secrecy our smiles take on before people and statuary  
it is hard to believe when I'm with you that there can be anything as still  
as solemn as unpleasantly definitive as statuary when right in front of it  
in the warm New York 4 o'clock light we are drifting back and forth  
between each other like a tree breathing through its spectacles

and the portrait show seems to have no faces in it at all, just paint  
you suddenly wonder why in the world anyone ever did them

I look

at you and I would rather look at you than all the portraits in the world  
except possibly for the *Polish Rider* occasionally and anyway it's in the Frick  
which thank heavens you haven't gone to yet so we can go together for the first  
time

and the fact that you move so beautifully more or less takes care of Futurism  
just as at home I never think of the *Nude Descending a Staircase* or  
at a rehearsal a single drawing of Leonardo or Michelangelo that used to wow me  
and what good does all the research of the Impressionists do them  
when they never got the right person to stand near the tree when the sun sank  
or for that matter Marino Marini when he didn't pick the rider as carefully  
as the horse

it seems they were all cheated of some marvelous experience  
which is not going to go wasted on me which is why I'm telling you about it

From *The Collected Poems of Frank O'Hara* by Frank O'Hara, copyright © 1971

Personal Poem by Frank O'Hara 1926 –1966

Now when I walk around at lunchtime  
I have only two charms in my pocket  
an old Roman coin Mike Kanemitsu gave me  
and a bolt-head that broke off a packing case  
when I was in Madrid the others never  
brought me too much luck though they did  
help keep me in New York against coercion  
but now I'm happy for a time and interested

I walk through the luminous humidity  
passing the House of Seagram with its wet  
and its loungers and the construction to  
the left that closed the sidewalk if  
I ever get to be a construction worker  
I'd like to have a silver hat please  
and get to Moriarty's where I wait for  
LeRoi and hear who wants to be a mover and  
shaker the last five years my batting average  
is .016 that's that, and LeRoi comes in  
and tells me Miles Davis was clubbed 12  
times last night outside BIRDLAND by a cop  
a lady asks us for a nickel for a terrible  
disease but we don't give her one we  
don't like terrible diseases, then  
we go eat some fish and some ale it's  
cool but crowded we don't like Lionel Trilling  
we decide, we like Don Allen we don't like  
Henry James so much we like Herman Melville  
we don't want to be in the poets' walk in  
San Francisco even we just want to be rich  
and walk on girders in our silver hats  
I wonder if one person out of the 8,000,000 is  
thinking of me as I shake hands with LeRoi  
and buy a strap for my wristwatch and go  
back to work happy at the thought possibly so

From *Lunch Poems* by Frank O'Hara. Copyright © 1964 by Frank O'Hara.  
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Winter Remembered by John Crowe Ransom 1888 –1974

Two evils, monstrous either one apart,  
Possessed me, and were long and loath at going:  
A cry of Absence, Absence, in the heart,  
And in the wood the furious winter blowing.

Think not, when fire was bright upon my bricks  
And past the tight boards hardly a wind could enter,  
I glowed like them, the simple burning sticks,  
Far from my cause, my proper heat, my center.

Better to walk forth in the murderous air  
And wash my wound in the snows; that would be healing,  
Because my heart would throb less painful there,  
Being caked with cold, and past the smart of feeling.

Which would you choose, and for what boot in gold,  
The absence, or the absence and the cold?

In Memoriam: Martin Luther King, Jr. by June Jordan 1936 – 2002

1

honey people murder mercy U.S.A.  
the milkland turn to monsters teach  
to kill to violate pull down destroy  
the weakly freedom growing fruit  
from being born  
America

tomorrow yesterday rip rape  
exacerbate despoil disfigure  
crazy running threat the  
deadly thrall  
appall belief dispel  
the wildlife burn the breast  
the onward tongue  
the outward hand  
deform the normal rainy  
riot sunshine shelter wreck  
of darkness derogate  
delimit blank  
explode deprive  
assassinate and batten up  
like bullets fatten up  
the raving greed  
reactivate a springtime  
terrorizing

death by men by more  
than you or I can  
STOP

2

They sleep who know a regulated place  
or pulse or tide or changing sky  
according to some universal  
stage direction obvious  
like shorewashed shells

we share an afternoon of mourning  
in between no next predictable  
except for wild reversal hearse rehearsal  
bleach the blacklong lunging  
ritual of fright insanity and more  
deplorable abortion  
more and  
more

## What Work Is by Philip Levine

We stand in the rain in a long line  
waiting at Ford Highland Park. For work.  
You know what work is – if you're  
old enough to read this you know what  
work is, although you may not do it.  
Forget you. This is about waiting,  
shifting from one foot to another.  
Feeling the light rain falling like mist  
into your hair, blurring your vision  
until you think you see your own brother  
ahead of you, maybe ten places.  
You rub your glasses with your fingers,  
and of course it's someone else's brother,  
narrower across the shoulders than  
yours but with the same sad slouch, the grin  
that does not hide the stubbornness,  
the sad refusal to give in to  
rain, to the hours wasted waiting,  
to the knowledge that somewhere ahead  
a man is waiting who will say, "No,  
we're not hiring today," for any  
reason he wants. You love your brother,  
now suddenly you can hardly stand  
the love flooding you for your brother,  
who's not beside you or behind or  
ahead because he's home trying to  
sleep off a miserable night shift  
at Cadillac so he can get up  
before noon to study his German.  
Works eight hours a night so he can sing  
Wagner, the opera you hate most,  
the worst music ever invented.  
How long has it been since you told him  
you loved him, held his wide shoulders,  
opened your eyes wide and said those words,  
and maybe kissed his cheek? You've never  
done something so simple, so obvious,

not because you're too young or too dumb,  
not because you're jealous or even mean  
or incapable of crying in  
the presence of another man, no,  
just because you don't know what work is.

## During the War by Philip Levine

When my brother came home from war  
he carried his left arm in a black sling  
but assured us most of it was still there  
Spring was late, the trees forgot to leaf out.

I stood in a long line waiting for bread.  
The woman behind me said it was shameless,  
someone as strong as i still home, still intact  
while her Michael was burning to death.

Yes, she could feel the fire. could smell  
his pain all the way from Tarawa -  
or was it Midway? - and he so young,  
younger than i, who was only fourteen,

taller, more handsome in his white uniform  
turning slowly gray the way unprimed wood  
grays slowly in the grate when the flames  
sputter and die. "I think I'm going mad,"

she said when i turned to face her. She placed  
both hands on my shoulders, kissed each eyelid,  
hugged me to her breasts and whispered wetly  
in my bad ear words I'd never heard before.

When I got home my brother ate the bread  
carefully one slice at a time until

nothing was left but a blank plate. "Did you see her,"  
he asked," the woman in hell, Michael's wife?"

That afternoon i walked the crowded streets  
looking for something I couldn't name,  
something familiar, a face or a voice or less,  
but not these shards of ash that fell from heaven.

Madrigal for the newly pregnant by Alice Notley 1945 -

It's past escapes  
It won't be long  
It's taking baby steps

Towards a giantess' song  
Becoming of another  
It's a same old song

On my hair it's a feather  
In my belly too  
There's you World no other

It's in you  
I'm like you

Taking baby steps  
It's past escapes

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Invitation to Love by Paul Laurence Dunbar 1872 – 1906

Come when the nights are bright with stars  
Or when the moon is mellow;  
Come when the sun his golden bars  
Drops on the hay-field yellow.  
Come in the twilight soft and gray,  
Come in the night or come in the day,  
Come, O love, whene'er you may,  
And you are welcome, welcome.

You are sweet, O Love, dear Love,  
You are soft as the nesting dove.  
Come to my heart and bring it rest  
As the bird flies home to its welcome nest.

Come when my heart is full of grief  
Or when my heart is merry;  
Come with the falling of the leaf  
Or with the redd'ning cherry.  
Come when the year's first blossom blows,  
Come when the summer gleams and glows,  
Come with the winter's drifting snows,  
And you are welcome, welcome.

## Gravity in Jerusalem by Arthur Russell

I wanted to grow up to be a raincloud over an upstate reservoir during a draught.

Then it was my ambition to become a slender woman, or a book cover cut from a grocery bag,  
or a trumpet, or a garden rake, or a handkerchief embroidered with a strawberry heart.

The evenings were much longer then. I wanted to be a satchel with latches that slid sideways  
to open, a cutting board bearing the wounds of nutrition on my back, the scratchy absolution  
of a dollar bill passing through the coin slot of a charity tin at the cashier of a candy store.

Like the colors in comic books when comic books were printed on foolscap, my irises  
would dilate for the dishwasher light in the darkened kitchen, and contract at the open  
refrigerator door. The brass drain in the kitchen sink, scrubbed with persistence

to a low brass glimmer was my art school; it whispered, *we are brass kin, and you are me  
in human form*. I wanted to grow up to be the lavender soap in a lingerie drawer  
or the handgun under the cable knit tennis sweater on the top shelf of the hall closet.

I envied the moldings around doorways, and wanted, more than friendship, to crawl  
inside a mezuzah, to read its scrolls in seclusion, and to emerge from my cell like morning in Manhattan with muted light on the brick façade of an apartment house.

I wanted to marry a book of matches once, to have children like misaligned wallpaper seams,  
and teach them how to blow their noses and spit up phlegm, and how to fit a square god  
in a round soul, and how to see all fathers as bags of donated clothing waiting by the door.

There is more light in a glass doorknob than gravity in Jerusalem.

—*from* **Poets Respond**  
December 10, 2023

**Arthur Russell:** “I have been preoccupied since October 7th with the tragic events in Israel and Gaza, preoccupied, sometimes embattled, and sometimes collapsing into a conflicted form of despair. I hear little bits of news and my emotions swing one way, and then other news, not necessarily conflicting new, that urges my heart and my rage and my despair in a new direction. Often, too, I feel disqualified by my distance from the reality, from having any feelings at all, and retreat to the emblems of my own spirit, my own morality, and my inheritance.”

Shroud of Light by Lisa Majaj

*If I must die, you must live to tell my story*  
—Refaat Alareer

By the time they killed Refaat, there was nothing new  
about the rows of bodies rolled up in stark white shrouds,  
surprisingly unbesmirched by dust or blood, tied

at both ends in neat bundles, sometimes in the middle  
too, so the sheet wouldn't slip, carried gently through  
streets on the way to mass graves, those pits dug

in whatever ground could be reached without the living  
being picked off by snipers, the unstained white  
of winding cloths belying the odor of carnagesimic

permeating every crevice, miasma of death hanging  
like an ashen pall in the sky, clogging the lungs of those  
who still try to breathe. A newscaster said, *children*

*are meant to play in the dirt, but in Gaza it's their shroud.*  
Even that is beyond many. One Gazan wrote, *if I die,*  
*please make sure my children's bodies are covered—*

not left open to wild dogs, the relentless, howling  
sky. Lost beneath rubble, Refaat was denied  
a poet's burial, left only stone dust and concrete

for his shroud. But the words that survive his death  
wrap his living spirit in a gauze of light.  
"There's a Palestine that dwells inside all of us,"

he wrote. Take his words, inscribe them on a kite,  
brilliant white, to fly high over the terrible world,  
so that his death is a tale that brings hope,

so that he lives, so that we live, so that Gaza  
becomes a place not of shrouds but of freedom,  
kites rippling in sunshine, lit by the blaze of life.

—*from Poets Respond*  
December 17, 2023

**Lisa Majaj:** “On December 7th, Gazan writer **Refaat Alareer was killed** along with family members in a targeted Israeli airstrike. Refaat was a professor of literature, a poet and writer, beloved inside and outside of Gaza for his words and for his role in the non profit organization We Are We Are Not Numbers (WANN), a youth-led project seeking to tell the stories of Gazans. Scores of Gazan poets, writers, artists, musicians and journalists had been killed in the past months. In a recording made before his killing Refaat said, choked with tears, ‘The situation is very bleak. We don’t even have water ... I only have my pen.’ Days before his death Refaat pinned **this poem** to his Twitter account.”

Hide and Seek by Charles Simic 1938-2023

Haven't found anyone  
From the old gang.  
They must be still in hiding,  
Holding their breaths  
And trying not to laugh.

Our street is down on its luck  
With windows broken  
Where on summer nights  
One heard couples arguing,  
Or saw them dancing to the radio.

The redhead we were  
All in love with,  
Who sat on the fire escape,  
Smoking late into the night,  
Must be in hiding too.

The skinny boy  
On crutches  
Who always carried a book,  
May not have  
Gotten very far.

Darkness comes early  
This time of year  
Making it hard  
To recognize familiar faces  
In those of strangers.

Imaginary Conversation by Linda Pastan 1932-2023

You tell me to live each day  
as if it were my last. This is in the kitchen  
where before coffee I complain  
of the day ahead—that obstacle race  
of minutes and hours,  
grocery stores and doctors.

But why the last? I ask. Why not  
live each day as if it were the first—  
all raw astonishment, Eve rubbing  
her eyes awake that first morning,  
the sun coming up  
like an ingénue in the east?

You grind the coffee  
with the small roar of a mind  
trying to clear itself. I set  
the table, glance out the window  
where dew has baptized every  
living surface.

The Soldier by David Ferry 1924 –2023

Saturday afternoon. The barracks is almost empty.  
The soldiers are almost all on overnight pass.  
There is only me, writing this letter to you,  
And one other soldier, down at the end of the room,  
And a spider, that hangs by the thread of his guts,  
His tenacious and delicate guts, Swift's spider,  
All self-regard, or else all privacy.  
The dust drifts in the sunlight around him, as currents  
Lie in lazy, drifting schools in the vast sea.  
In his little sea the spider lowers himself  
Out of his depth. He is his own diving bell,  
Though he cannot see well. He observes no fish,  
And sees no wonderful things. His unseeing guts  
Are his only hold on the world outside himself.  
I love you, and miss you, and I find you hard to imagine.  
Down at the end of the room, the other soldier  
Is getting ready, I guess, to go out on pass.  
He is shining his boots. He sits on the edge of his bunk,  
Private, submissive, and heedful of himself,  
And, bending over himself, he is his own nest.  
The slightest sound he makes is of his being.  
He is his mother, and nest, wife, brother, and father.  
His boots are bright already, yet still he rubs  
And rubs till, brighter still, they are his mirror,  
And in this mirror he observes, I guess,  
His own submissiveness. He is far from home.



Peace and Rain by Zoey Sheffield (age 6)

The raindrops fall  
on all that is quiet.  
A soft wind blows  
a tear off your face.  
The cents of a penny  
is less than your love.  
A good night.

Gregory Orr

Weeping, weeping, weeping.  
No wonder the oceans are full;  
No wonder the seas are rising.

It's not the beloved's fault.  
Dying is part of the story.  
It's not your fault either:  
Tears are also.

But

You can't read when you're  
Crying. Sobbing, you won't  
Hear the song that resurrects  
The body of the beloved.

Why not rest awhile? If weeping  
Is one of the world's tasks,  
It doesn't lack adherents.  
Someone will take your place,  
Someone will weep for you.

**Gregory Orr:** "I know these words are hard to work with, because they sound naive. But they're not naive, they're fundamental. I think when I read a poem that deeply moves me, that feels beautiful and moving, I feel as though I've been given more courage to live."

Moon Shell by Grace Schulman

August, I walk this shore in search of wholeness  
among snapped razor clams and footless quahogs.  
How easily my palm cradles a moon shell

coughed up on shore. I stroke the fragments  
as, last night, I stroked your arm  
smelling of salt, scrubbed clean by the sea air.

Once you loped near me. Now, in my mind's eye,  
your rubbery footsoles track sand hills  
the shape of waves you no longer straddle.

You inch forward, step, comma, pause,  
your silences the wordless rage of pain.  
But still at night our bodies merge in sleep

and fit unbroken, like the one perfect shell  
I've never found and can only imagine –  
that cracks when we're apart. I clutch the moon shell,

guardian of unknowing, chipped and silent,  
until I fling it down and feel its loss.  
Broken, it fit my hand and I was whole.

The Monument by Grace Schulman

You walk by ferns, green even in winter,  
to find David Glasgow Farragut,  
and ask who was this chesty admiral

who merits a bronze statue with alluring  
mermaids, sirens really, carved beneath it,  
his jaw set as though he'd walk on water.

*Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead!*  
Futile now. But look in marble eyes  
and see a Southerner who fought for the Union's

end to slavery. The guidebooks snub him,  
but not my students: in the park one day,  
asked to write of anything, they chose him..

Was it the sea they caught? The bare-armed beauties?  
or did they see a man in a broken country  
who sacked his politics for what was right?

How I Learned to Dance by Philip Fried

Mother, I always lost you behind  
Your two-sided mirror but found a bowl  
Wavering while the rouge went on  
In dabs, “painting,” you said. I couldn’t  
Still the glass that whirled by me,  
Reflecting not me but every thing,  
Brief inventory. Mother, you danced  
With mirrors that held your waist, and  
Pivoting, glided you, swept you around  
The glassy room while you applied  
Lipstick and listened for the glassy  
Whisper, “I love you.”—it never did—  
While I was camped in doorways, disputing  
Any passage with many armed men,  
But we were so little compared to dancing  
Legs, the calves and heels that we made  
Awkward. Those rooms had too many doorways;  
Immobile, I rode the threshold saddle:  
Push through *me*, mother, as once *I*  
Inched through you, and here I am

Born as the mirror, I am not I.  
You waltz me around a room, and I tell  
Lipstick to accent the curve, approve  
Rouge, each grain of powder and  
It’s always your face I must surrender,  
Always the centrifugal room  
In mirror’s underwater on one  
Breath; silly, I’m acting you again,  
And laid on the table I’m nothing but ready,  
Mooning as usual up at the ceiling.  
Now I’m so dizzy the room never  
Can settle down though it quickly has all  
That it has: It’s you again, hello,  
I don’t dare ask how you’ve been but only  
Can say what I clearly see, just looking  
I know, but shimmer a little, wisely,

That's all, maybe just one tear, two,  
But how can I be each pore, I'll close  
Down, angry dog of doorways, block  
This picking up, placing down of me . . .  
One two three one two three this is easy,  
Grandpa grandma, the little Russian  
Bride and bridegroom, posing atop  
The wedding cake and the samovar plays  
"Silly goose safe in the wolf's belly"  
with tea as sweet as violins.  
The war is over, open the spigots,  
Let voices flow from the reservoir  
Of the radio, let your splintered fingers  
Dance on the saved glass of your face.

Oedipus, Tourist by Philip Fried

I wake as the flies tickle  
my too many skins—I packed  
some changes just to be safe;  
I packed my own arrival  
to unroll like a welcome rug;  
I packed a crashing wave  
in case of a lack of surf  
and folded the sun inside  
and inside the sun a rooster  
crowing at all hours—  
you can't be too forewarned;  
I tucked away seven countries  
neatly according to function  
like blades of a Swiss army knife;  
I lugged my ambivalence  
freckled with decals  
of a hundred destinations . . .

You sleep at the crossroads of four  
dimensions, your inward smile  
the soft orgasm of stone,  
your only baggage a riddle:

What walks naked on nine  
feet through the instant's door?

Summer by Alicia Ostriker

It is summer still hot sun  
trees heavy with foliage

loud birds in the shrubbery  
hiding from hawks

neglected towers collapsing  
and the plagues of poverty

and addiction and despair  
and the attack of the invisible

against a temple here or there  
white stone gone dead

What am I to make of all this beauty  
and all this sorrow

please just act like normal  
like everything will be okay

please trust the system  
say the system managers

from nowhere a woman nameless  
stands up shouting

watch out for the angels  
they despise you

there they go flying over you  
heading for the coast



cold steel  
confident

coughing garbage  
into the atmosphere

above you

## ALL THAT YEAR

For Cynthia Hogue

We were body surfing a wave of public venom  
attempting to swim it was terrific thrilling  
hate sprayed us on the left and on the right  
we wondered would it smash us into a reef

onscreen our swaggering leader man we elected  
loosed lies from his lips like eels  
it was a good moment for cartoonists and journalists  
and billionaires and lovers of guns a good moment

for poets poets thrive on disaster  
born as we are within the wound

Searchers by Dennis Nurkse

We gave our dogs a button to sniff,  
or a tissue, and they bounded off  
confident in their training,  
in the power of their senses  
to recreate the body,

but after eighteen hours in rubble  
where even steel was pulverized  
they curled on themselves  
and stared up at us  
and in their soft huge eyes  
we saw mirrored the longing for death:

then we had to beg a stranger  
to be a victim and crouch  
behind a girder, and let the dogs  
discover him and tug him  
proudly, with suppressed yaps,  
back to Command and the rows  
of empty triage tables.

But who will hide from us?  
Who will keep digging for us  
here in the cloud of ashes?

A Night in Brooklyn by Dennis Nurkse

We undid a button,  
turned out the light,  
and in that narrow bed  
we built the great city—  
water towers, cisterns,  
hot asphalt roofs, parks,  
septic tanks, arterial roads,  
Canarsie, the intricate channels,  
the seacoast, underwater mountains,  
bluffs, islands, the next continent,  
using only the palms of our hands  
and the tips of our tongues, next  
we made darkness itself, by then  
it was time for dawn  
and we closed our eyes  
and counted to ourselves  
until the sun rose  
and we had to take it all to pieces  
for there could be only one Brooklyn.

## SONG LYRICS

Three Little Maids... by Gilbert & Sullivan

Three little maids from school are we  
Pert as a school-girl well can be  
Filled to the brim with girlish glee  
Three little maids from school

Everything is a source of fun  
Nobody's safe, for we care for none  
Life is a joke that's just begun  
Three little maids from school

Three little maids who, all unwary  
Come from a ladies' seminary  
Freed from its genius tutelary  
Three little maids from school  
Three little maids from school

One little maid is a bride, Yum-Yum  
Two little maids in attendance come  
Three little maids is the total sum  
Three little maids from school  
Three little maids from school

From three little maids take one away  
Two little maids remain, and they  
Won't have to wait very long, they say  
Three little maids from school  
Three little maids from school

Three little maids who, all unwary  
Come from a ladies' seminary  
Freed from its genius tutelary  
Three little maids from school  
Three little maids from school

## Lady Came From Baltimore

Lady came from Baltimore  
All she wore was lace  
She didn't know that I was poor  
She never saw my place  
I was there to steal her money  
To take her rings and run  
Then I fell in love with the lady  
Got away with none  
The lady's name was Susan Moore  
Her daddy read the law  
She didn't know that I was poor  
And lived outside the law  
Her daddy said I was a thief  
And didn't marry her for love  
I was Susan's true belief  
Married her for love  
I was there to steal her money  
To take her rings and run  
Then I fell in love with the lady  
Got away with none  
How she lived in, had a wall  
To keep the robbers out  
She'd never stop to think at all  
If that's what I'm about  
I was there to steal her money  
To take her rings and run  
Then I fell in love with the lady  
Got away with none

Reason to Believe by Tim Hardin

If I listened long enough to you  
I'd find a way to believe that it's all true  
Knowing that you lied  
Straight-faced while I cried  
Still I look to find a reason to believe

Someone like you  
Makes it hard to live without  
Somebody else  
Someone like you  
Makes it easy to give  
Never think about myself

If I gave you time to change my mind  
I'd find the way just to leave all the past behind  
Knowing that you lied  
Straight-faced while I cried  
Still I look to find a reason to believe

If I listened long enough to you  
I'd find a way to believe that it's all true  
Knowing that you lied  
Straight-faced while I cried  
Still I look to find a reason to believe

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Someone like you  
Makes it hard to live without  
Somebody else  
Someone like you

Makes it easy to give  
Never think about myself

Someone like you  
Makes it hard to live without  
Somebody else  
Someone like you  
Makes it easy to give  
Never think about myself  
Someone like you  
Makes it hard to live without  
Somebody else

## Blowin' in the wind by Bob Dylan

How many roads must a man walk down  
Before you call him a man?  
How many seas must a white dove sail  
Before she sleeps in the sand?  
Yes, and how many times must the cannonballs fly  
Before they're forever banned?  
The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind  
The answer is blowin' in the wind  
Yes, and how many years must a mountain exist  
Before it is washed to the sea?  
And how many years can some people exist  
Before they're allowed to be free?  
Yes, and how many times can a man turn his head  
And pretend that he just doesn't see?  
The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind  
The answer is blowin' in the wind  
Yes, and how many times must a man look up  
Before he can see the sky?  
And how many ears must one man have  
Before he can hear people cry?  
Yes, and how many deaths will it take 'til he knows  
That too many people have died?  
The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind  
The answer is blowin' in the wind



Sunday by Stephen Sondheim

Sunday, by the blue purple yellow red water  
On the green purple yellow red grass  
Let us pass through our perfect park  
Pausing on a Sunday

By the cool blue triangular water  
On the soft green elliptical grass  
As we pass through arrangements of shadow  
Toward the verticals of trees  
Forever

By the blue purple yellow red water  
On the green orange violet mass of the grass  
In our perfect park

Made of flecks of light  
And dark  
And parasols  
Bum bum bum bum bum bum  
Bum bum bum

People strolling through the trees  
Of a small suburban park  
On an island in the river  
On an ordinary Sunday  
Sunday

Love for Sale by Cole Porter

When the only sound in the empty street  
Is the heavy tread of the heavy feet  
That belong to a lonesome cop  
I open shop

When the moon so long has been gazing down  
On the wayward ways of this wayward town  
That her smile becomes a smirk  
I go to work

Love for sale  
Appetizing young love for sale  
Love that's fresh and still unspoiled  
Love that's only slightly soiled  
Love for sale

Who will buy?  
Who would like to sample my supply?  
Who's prepared to pay the price  
For a trip to paradise?  
Love for sale

Let the poets pipe of love  
In their childish way  
I know every type of love  
Better far than they

## FROM OUR OWN

Water by Rita Satz

I loved it  
Diving into waves  
At the beach where I met him  
Teenagers laughing  
Sputtering  
Excuses for Holding on to each other

Floating on lakes and lagoons  
In far-away places  
We went to together  
Leaving our life behind  
You can do that  
For a while

Playing with  
Laughing children  
Splashing  
Smiling over their heads

Walking on sand  
Sliding feet  
On the wet shore  
Leaving one set of footprints  
Single file

A few steps  
A dent  
Made by a cane  
That's enough  
It's not enough

City Rain by Rita Satz

There should be another word for it  
The rain that falls in the city  
Not the same as country rain  
That spatters on the roof  
Spoons tapping on a china plate  
Sliding down windows  
Bending flowers

City rain  
At street corners  
Wet wind  
Twisted umbrella in trash cans  
Orange peels floating in gutters  
Paper spread-eagled against store windows  
It needs a different name

Endless Night by Renée Lerner

4/18/2022

Will the floral be abounding in the forest of the life?  
Can the wind blow 'gainst the tide, not submit to evil strife?  
What is there if freedom dies and the dove is stripped of flight?  
Can the eagle fly through sorrow and the thickened fog of night?

Doomed to live in evil's home, can I beat the devil's life?  
Will there be an end to gall? How to manage in the thrall?

Callous dastards have their sway. Scorched, bright spirit crawls or air.  
Lout unruly claims its flesh, whilst the threat controls the tune.  
Just to stand with empty fists, 'gainst the rot of man's grand ego.  
Oh, for love and kindly fare. I'm bereft of all I care for.

Lost for words, my words denied, mired deep in endless night.  
Waiting! Waiting for the light. It will come, when who knows where.

Simply Put by Martha Sturgeon

Keep your strong on  
Let your heart's song  
Billow and fly  
Don't eye another's frown or put your head down  
Say it loud, I live and  
I'm proud of each triumph and blip  
All moments are script  
To share with a tip of the hat  
To the come hell or high water unity  
Of the community  
We are